Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the convening of the new Federal Parliament in Somalia

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission issued the following statement today:

"With the first convening of the new Federal Parliament of Somalia yesterday a milestone has been reached in the ending of the transition. This is the first time in twenty years that Somalis have met in Somalia to decide the future of their country.

I acknowledge and thank the Committee of Elders and the Technical Selection Committee for their work thus far in nominating and selecting Members of Parliament in accordance with the Garowe Principles. We urge all the participants of the political process in Somalia to continue their work in the spirit of peace, compromise and dialogue so that Somalia and all Somalis can move forward with a sense of clarity within a new political framework.

I congratulate the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for his tireless efforts and pay tribute to all those Somalis and African Union forces who have sacrificed so much to create the conditions of security in which the Somali people can fulfil their aspiration for a life of peace, stability and prosperity.

The Somali people deserve to be represented by leaders, including women, who reflect all facets of Somali society. We encourage the Committee of Elders and the Technical Selection Committee to complete their work without interruption or interference so that this aspiration can be met.

We are confident of the positive momentum created in recent weeks, and we look forward to the completion of the transition process in the next few days with the Parliament reaching its full membership, appointing a President and completing the other remaining tasks."

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P R E S S

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